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ABSTRACT

A procedure for providing feedback on compositions of advanced second language learners is described. Under this procedure, called reformulation, a native speaker rewrites second language learners' essays so that the ideas are preserved but presented in a native-like manner. A case study in reformulating Hebrew-as-a-second-language essay and a small study involving the reformulation of university level English-as-a-second-language and Hebrew-as-a-second language essays are reported. The case study demonstrates how a reformulation provides information not provided by a reconstruction, especially in regard to vocabulary appropriate for a written technical register, syntactic structures, and cohesive markers. The second study provides a comparison of the typical teacher correction or reconstruction and reformulation. The reformulations gave more extensive feedback on improving the essays, especially in the area of cohesion. Student reactions were mostly positive in that reformulation provided them with a complete example of a more native-like way to express their own ideas. (Author/RW)

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Writing Like a Native: The Process of Reformulation*

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*Paper presented at the 16th Annual TESOL Convention, May 1-6, Honolulu, Hawaii. I would like to acknowledge Elite Olshtain, Shoshana Blum-Kulka, Raphael Nir, and Ruti Sela for their assistance with my case study; Jonathan Tunik, Ziona Hajbi, Denise Levin, Ronit Weiss, and Hanna Ackerman for their assistance with the small-scale study; and the teachers, Shirna Kisilevitch, Tami Weil, Hava Ferstai, Levia Fiorco, and Hadassa Gerson, who participated in the study and who provided their students. Special thanks go to the students themselves. Finally, thanks to Eddie Levenston for his ideas and his feedback.

This paper addresses the issue of feedback to second-language learners on compositions at the advanced level. The question being raised is whether the currently-used forms of feedback really make a difference in terms of language development. Although systems of correction vary, they are often characterized by feedback regarding choice of content, organization of ideas, and use of language. Correction may mean indicating the type of error, and possibly also indicating the correct form (see, for example, Knapp 1972, Gorman 1979, Hendrickson 1980). Whatever system of feedback teachers use, in actual practice they do not usually edit thoroughly or rewrite even a small portion of an essay.

Limited teacher feedback on essays may result from one of a variety of reasons: limited time to spend grading any one paper, a desire not to spoon-feed the learner (hence the use of symbols to suggest types of errors), and lack of ease in correction. In other words, teachers may not correct something because then a host of other things would need to be corrected as well. In reality, teachers usually content themselves with being selective -- singling out a few of the more conspicuous errors or the ones relating to a current pedagogical focus or whatever. There is another reason why teachers may be selective in what they choose to correct. They may well be following some intuitive sense of what is appropriate to expect of learners, even at the more advanced levels of interlanguage. In other words, just as teachers may be using a simple code or teacher talk in class, they may judge the essays at least to some extent in keeping with this simplified code.

The usual alternative to converting each student's essay into something that reads in a native-like fashion is a correction process that involves patch-up work. For example, the teacher may correct several glaring mistakes in choice of vocabulary. The problem is that within a context of words and phrases that are not quite native-like, a teacher may leave other inappropriate

forms as they are. Particularly if students are encouraged to rewrite these patched-up essays at home, such a process may be encouraging the learner to fossilize interlanguage structures, rather than to move on toward mastery. Even if they have to rewrite their own essays incorporating changes, students may not pay much attention to the corrections on their essays. Moreover, attending to the corrections does not ensure benefiting from them. It has been shown, for instance, that learners differ in their use of conscious monitoring in revising their writing (Krashen 1981, So 1980). Thus, any system of feedback is bound to assist only a subsample of students. That being the case, the challenge is to provide truly impactful ways of providing feedback -- ways that will motivate interest, even if for only a percentage of the students.

One approach has been to have students analyze in detail the problems found in one or more essays selected from among those written by classmates (Witbeck 1976). For example, a recent proprosal for a writing course for economics students utilizes this approach: "...the writer can best learn to predict the problems his writing might cause by being exposed to the writing problems of others..." (Wall 1981, p. 68). However, the impact of this approach may be only partial in that the learners are not necessarily dealing with their own writing problems.

Another suggested solution involves the use of rigorous editing (Anderson 1981). Students put their essay through six drafts with a new draft at each of five levels of analysis: word, sentence, inter-sentence, paragraph, and general overview. First, the teacher corrects the papers. Then comes the first edit, which is a group process. Subsequent edits are conducted by the students individually and are intended to give the learners an opportunity to develop their critical self. A potential problem with an editing approach is that even after the different types

of editing, the end product still may not sound native-like. Particularly during the phases when the learners are doing their own editing, they may not be sure about appropriate ways to edit.

There is, however, another approach, which goes beyond editing to reformulating, a notion developed by Levenston (1978). Levenston took an essay written in English by an eleventh-grade Israeli student, and first eliminated the surface errors through plausible reconstruction (Corder 1974). That is, he corrected the composition so that it better approximated the target language, without the learner's input as to what he meant to write. This process of reconstruction characterizes one type of feedback that the classroom teacher often provides, to a greater or lesser extent -- namely, actual corrections of surface errors.

After reconstructing the essay, Levenston noted that the essay was still in need of corrections of the kind often provided by teachers of native-language composition -- corrections regarding things such as lexical inadequacy, syntactic blend (two separate ideas in one syntactic construction), conceptual confusion, rhetorical deviance, and ambiguity. Levenston proposed that we distinguish a first stage of reconstruction, aimed at removing goofs, from a further stage of reformulation, aimed at improving the style and clarity of thought. In this second stage, a native writer of the target language rewrites the essay, preserving all the learner's ideas, making it sound as native-like as possible. This reformulation marks, then, a departure from even the best edit of such an essay.

Levenston stopped short of proposing that such a technique be utilized in the second-language classroom. He queried, "...what second-language teacher has time for such detailed treatment, much of which should be handled in the first-language classroom?" (Levenston

1978, p. 11). My response to this query was to investigate whether the technique could, in fact, be adapted for use in second-language classrooms.

During the 1980-81 year I tried out the process of reformulation with foreign students in an advanced ESL writing class (English 106J) that I taught at the University of California, Los Angeles (Cohen, 1981). The learners were requested to rewrite their essays which I had reconstructed and then submit them to a native speaker from among their circle of friends and acquaintances to do a reformulation.

An important reason for having natives reformulate what the non-natives wrote rather than writing about their own ideas was that in this way the non-natives would be able to feel that the essay was still theirs, even though it was reformulated. Once the students obtained the reformulations, they were to compare the orginal and reconstructed versions with this reformulation -- making several passes through the essay, each time focusing on a different aspect of the writing (vocabulary, syntax, cohesion, rhetorical functions, and paragraphing) and listing any significant differences that they found. The students had become familiar with these categories through work in the course.

The results were positive. Rather than having me peck away at their writing on a piecemeal basis, they had an opportunity to see where they stood in relation to where they would be if they wrote natively. The value was not just in seeing the distinction between their writing and mastery, but also in determining areas which they might wish to focus on in improving their writing. What also emerged was that whereas some learners had the motivation and monitoring ability to benefit from a comparison between the reconstruction and the reformulation on their own, others needed more guidance in obtaining insights from this comparison.

These preliminary results encouraged me to pursue investigation of reformulation further. This paper reports on two efforts, one a case study in reformulating a Hebrew essay of mine, and the other a small-scale study of English-Foreign-Language (EFL) and Hebrew-Second-Language (HSL) reformulations at the university level in Israel.

Case Study: The Researcher as Subject

In this case study I was interested in exploring the following issues:

(1) the extent to which the best edit of my work would still at times be awkwardly tied to my original version in ways that the reformulation would not.

(2) the extent to which I experienced major insights or breakthroughs in my Hebrew writing as a result of the procedure.

(3) the extent to which different reformulators of the same reconstructed essay would agree on what to change and how.

Method

Subject

I decided to make myself a subject in the research on reformulations to get a participant observer's view of how it works and of its possible benefits. I had studied Hebrew formally for three years, including an intensive summer course at the most advanced university level (the sixth level). Although I had not had any formal training in writing in Hebrew, I had written numerous letters and memos in Hebrew and had lectured in Hebrew for four and a half years.

Materials and Procedures

I wrote an essay of about 600 words in Hebrew as a second language on the topic, "What is Psycholinguistics?" I then had a native Hebrew speaker, who was trained in translation and was at the time a graduate student in Communications, do a plausible reconstruction of the essay --

i.e., correct the essay without me there to explain what I meant to write. She did an extensive job of reconstructing the essay, thus making the reconstruction a fairly thorough edit of the essay. The reconstruction included 90 changes in the areas of vocabulary, syntax, cohesion, rhetorical functions, and paragraphing -- one change every seven words.

I then asked three colleagues in applied linguistics and a Hebrew teacher to reformulate this reconstructed version of the essay. The reformulators were instructed to rewrite the essay in their own words, preserving all of my ideas. They were not instructed to critique the content -- rather to express the content as naturally as possible in Hebrew. My colleagues made on the average approximately 50 changes in going from the reconstruction to the reformulation -- one change every 12 words. As it turned out, the Hebrew teacher did not reformulate the essay because she felt that she was not enough of a specialist in the technical field dealt with in the essay to do so.

Data Analysis

For this study, I did my own comparison between the reconstruction and the reformulation, without the assistance of a native. I carefully compared the two versions for differences in vocabulary, syntax, cohesion, rhetorical functions, and paragraphing. Differences were recorded as changes in vocabulary when a lexical item or phrase was replaced by another one, for one of a series of reasons -- e.g., to be more precise, to be concise, to achieve an appropriate level of formality, and so forth. Differences in syntax usually referred to word order changes; choice and ordering of clauses; agreement in person, gender, number; and so forth. Differences in cohesion referred to gramatical cohesion (the marking of pronominal reference and the use of conjunctions) and to lexical cohesion (lexical repetition, superordinates, and

general items). Differences in rhetorical functions usually referred to the manner in which the reconstruction or reformulation indicated a classification, a comparison, a contrast, exemplification, or some other rhetorical purpose. Paragraphing referred to the number of physical paragraphs and their location.

Results

First, let us look at the issue of whether the reconstruction would sometimes be awkwardly tied to the original version in ways that the reformulation would not be. The results seemed to corroborate this assumption. The reconstructor made the largest proportion of her changes in vocabulary -- 86%, whereas the average proportion of changes in vocabulary relative to other categories for the three reformulators was only 47%. The reformulations had proportionately more changes than the reconstruction in syntax (rec. 5% vs. ref. 17%), cohesion (rec. 8% vs. ref. 28%), and rhetorical functions (rec. 1% vs. ref. 6%).

Second, let us consider the issue of whether I experienced any breakthroughs in Hebrew writing as a result of the procedure. The results were positive -- on all levels. First, with respect to vocabulary, I found that I tended to use in writing the same vocabulary that I use in talking. Perhaps more than in English, there is a separate register for written Hebrew, which I was not using. Register difficultires were particularly noticeable in my use of conjunctions and adverbs. I realized that I have a working knowledge of technical terms -- nouns and verbs primarily -- but not so much of the formal carrier language -- the function words. But even with respect to the nouns and verbs, it became clear that I do not yet have a good sense as to the appropriate choice within a semantic field. For example, I was not native-like in my choice of the following verbs

in a given context in Hebrew: livdok 'to investigate,' laxkor 'to research,' la'asok be- 'to engage in,' and livxon 'to examine.' The reformulators often replaced one of these with another.

With respect to syntax, the reconstructor tended to preserve my syntactic structures whereas the reformulators changed them. One major change was that of inverting the order of the subject noun phrase and the verb phrase following an adverbial phrase. I used the NP + VP order (e.g., the researchers investigated...) which is generally acceptable except after adverbial phrase (e.g., Until ten years ago, investigated the researchers... (in Hebrew)). The reconstructor mostly allowed this infraction of a syntactic rule in Hebrew. The reformulators changed it.

With respect to cohesion, the reformulators made over three times as many changes proportionate to total changes as did the reconstructor. The reformulators' emphasis was on making my references more explicit. For example, in English I can simply refer to the learners once I have stipulated that I am referring to second-language learners. In Hebrew there is a need to write: the language learners. I also tended to use more pronominal reference in my Hebrew than the reformulators. For example, in cases when I simply wrote the Hebrew equivalent of it, he, or they, the reformulators would change it to a lexical substitute for the original -- e.g. Me: It investigates... Ref.: This field investigates... (with reference being to the field of psycholinguistics).

The reformulators also were more likely to change the form for certain rhetorical functions than was the reconstructor. For example, the reformulators mitigated my strength of claim on occasion (e.g., from the equivalent of this suggests that... to this could suggest that...).

Another area was that of exemplification. The reformulators would make my moves to exemplify more overt -- e.g., changing the Hebrew equivalent of psycholinguistics investigates, for example... to an appropriate example of areas which psycholinguistics investigates...

Thirdly, let us look at the issue of whether the three reformulators agreed on what to change and how. They usually did change the same words, phrases, and sentences. They had a similar number of changes (50 on the average) and a similar number of changes within each category (vocabulary, syntax, cohesion, and rhetorical functions). However, they did not usually produce the exact same reformulations. They differed somewhat in vocabulary, syntactic structures, and sometimes in the interpretation of the text -- usually where the text was ambiguous.

As it turned out, I was preparing the article for publication in a local journal, so I had an opportunity to draw on the best from each of the three reformulations in my rewriting of the article. What I experienced was that three versions of any given change appeared acceptable to me and that my choice of one over another was usually just based on gut-level preference.

Discussion

The finding that the reconstruction had many more changes in vocabulary proportionate to the other categories than did the reformulation may simply reflect the fact that my essay needed a lot of changes in vocabulary, and that the first person who came in contact with it made them. The fact that the reformulations had more changes in syntax, cohesion, and rhetorical functions suggests that the person who is not doing the first-pass correction of an essay and who is told to rewrite the essay will concentrate more on higher-order changes than surface vocabulary. Perhaps my biggest breakthrough dealt with problems of cohesion. I may have been remotely aware that

pronominal reference (anaphora and cataphora) is more common in English than in Hebrew, where more lexical repetition takes place (Levenston 1976, Berman 1980). Yet I was unaware that my marking of cohesion in Hebrew was being influenced by a negative transfer of the patterns for marking cohesion in English. This task of reformulation assisted me in a firsthand application of theoretical knowledge.

My case study does not reflect a typical reconstruction-reformulation task like others I discuss in this paper. For one thing, I wrote a technical piece, whereas I usually have students write non-technical pieces (e.g., satisfaction in life or life on a new university campus). My reconstructor was not a classroom teacher who had to grade a stack of essays. She was someone who had some familiarity with the technical field and could take the time to go through my essay carefully. My aim was to see if reformulation works even after extensive reconstruction. My conclusion is affirmative. It seems that a reconstructor is in some ways too close to the original version and, furthermore, is not actually given the task of making the essay sound native-like. The reformulators come along with a different perspective -- to make the style sound native-like, and in so doing they also end up finding subtle or not so subtle errors in vocabulary and syntax as well.

This case study did suggest that reformulations in specializaed fields (like psycholinguistics) be carried out by people with a knowledge of the field. Even though the task does not call for changes in content, such a technical essay taxes the knowledge of the reformulator and may make the experienced language teacher feel unqualified, as in this case study. It also may be beneficial to have my reformulators assess the acceptability of each other's reformulated versions to see if they agree with me that any of their versions is acceptable (Levenston, personal communication).

A Small-Scale Study of EFL and HSL Reformulations

In an effort to further pursue the reformulation procedure, a small-scale study was undertaken in Israel during February and March, 1982. The major issues being investigated were:

(1) What kinds of differences are there, if any, in the nature of the changes made in a reformulated composition as opposed to a reconstructed one?

(2) In what ways and to what extent might a student benefit from exposure to the reformulated version?

Method

Subjects

Two groups of Hebrew University students participated in the study. There were seven non-native English speakers in their second year of a B.A. in English language and literature (all females). They were students in a course required for English B.A. students without an exemption. Five were native Hebrew speakers. One was a native Spanish speaker, and one a native French speaker, both living in Israel for over ten years. All the students had been studying English for an average of nine years, but without much training in written English before starting their B.A. in English.

There were also six non-native Hebrew speakers (three males and three females), five of whom came from three fifth-level Hebrew classes and one from the most advanced level, the sixth level. None had had much formal training in Hebrew writing. There were two English speakers, the rest being native speakers of Hungarian, Portuguese, German, and Spanish respectively.

Thus, the selection of subjects provided for a group writing English as a foreign language and for a group writing Hebrew as a second language, the language of wider communication in the community.

Materials and Procedures

The students were asked to write a short, informal composition (approx. 400 words) in which they presented their suggestions for improving student life at the new Hebrew University campus on Mount Scopus. The composition was to serve as the basis for a hypothetical oral presentation to a student group. Then their respective teachers reconstructed the compositions, correcting them as they normally would. Next, most of the students rewrote the composition, incorporating the teachers' corrections so that the reformulator would receive a clean copy of the essay. Except for several cases, the reformulators for this study were the two English-speaking and the three Hebrew-speaking research assistants. These assistants compared the reformulations with the reconstructions before meeting with the students. They then conducted 1½-2 hour interviews with the students.

In these interview sessions, the learners generally read both the reconstructed and reformulated versions of the composition to themselves first. Next, the learners were asked if they noticed ways in which the two versions differed. Then the research assistants called attention to a series of points within the categories of vocabulary, syntax, cohesion, rhetorical functions, and paragraphing. The students were asked to react to these points, indicating whether they were aware of them or whether they came as a surprise to them. In other words, the assistants were interested in whether calling attention to these points provided the students with any new insights or breakthroughs regarding their writing in the second or foreign language.

Finally, the learners were asked to evaluate the process with regard to whether they thought that the reformulated version was better than the reconstruction, whether they would like to write that way, and whether they

had any comments about the procedure in general.

Data Analysis

First, a count was made of the total number of changes made in the reconstruction of the composition and in the reformulation. Tallies were also made by category of change -- vocabulary, syntax, cohesion, rhetorical functions, and paragraphing -- as in the case study of my essay. These tallies provided an opportunity to compare the reconstruction with the reformulation in terms of both the extensiveness of each and the areas that it tended to emphasize.

Second, the responses of students during the interviews were content analyzed. Student comments were sorted into lists of what the students were already aware of with respect to their writing and what they had been unaware of until the interview, with a separate listing of comments evaluating the procedure.

Results

The teacher in the language course for English B.A. students made on the average 36 corrections per reconstructed composition (one change every 11 words). The reformulators made on the average another 71 changes in their reformulations from the reconstructed version (one change every six words), or about twice as many changes as were made by the teacher. The four Hebrew teachers correcting the compositions of advanced Hebrew-second-language (HSL) students made on the average only 15 corrections per essay (one change every 27 words). The reformulators of these essays made on the average 71 changes, the same as the reformulators of the English essays. In this case, then, the reformulations had almost five times as many changes as the reconstructions.

As to the nature of the changes, for the EFL compositions the average percent of total changes that were made in vocabulary, syntax, and paragraphing were similar for both versions (vocabulary, rec. 41% vs. ref. 43%; syntax,

rec. 19% vs. ref. 13%; paragraphing, rec. 4% vs. ref. 8%). As for the categories of rhetorical functions and cohesion, there were more changes regarding rhetorical functions in the reconstruction (rec. 17% vs. ref. 6%) and more changes dealing with cohesion in the reformulation (rec. 19% vs. ref. 29%).

For the HSL compositions, the average percent of total changes that were made in vocabulary and rhetorical functions were more or less similar (vocabulary, rec. 38% vs. ref. 46%; rhetorical functions, rec. 2% vs. ref. 6%). There were no changes in paragraphing in the reconstruction while 4% of the changes in the reformulation were in this area. While there were proportionately more changes in syntax in the reconstruction than in the reformulation (syntax, rec. 54% vs. ref. 23%), there were proportionately more changes regarding cohesion in the reformulation (cohesion, rec. 7% vs. ref. 21%).

When the students compared the reconstruction with the reformulation in the interview session with the research assistant, there were some instances of real insights -- mostly with respect to problems of cohesion. For example, an HSL writer gained an insight about how she was not linking sentences with conjunctions as the native Hebrew speaker did. Also, through this reformulation procedure several EFL writers gained the insight that whereas they used lexical repetition to refer to something already mentioned in the composition, the native English speaker switched to pronominal reference. Similar insights were gained about grammatical rules, precision in the use of vocabulary, and differences in levels of formality in the second or foreign language.

There were numerous instances where the students indicated that they were already aware of the problem in their writing. For example, the

students noticed that the reformulation was both more precise and more concise. One EFL student remarked, "I write what I can, not what I want." Students noted the changes in grammatical structures -- how usually the grammatical structures in the reformulation were more complex. Students also noted the use of vocabulary and expressions that were either difficult for them or not yet learned. They noticed that the style in the reformulation was freer and more natural. One HSL student pointed out that ways of writing things in Hebrew were more direct stylistically than in English, according to what he observed in his comparisons.

When asked to evaluate the procedure, the students' reactions were generally favorable. Most "liked it," thought it was "a good idea," "valuable." One even regretted not having used a system like this from the start of her studies. Only one was negative toward the procedure, and one was indifferent. The main contention of the student opposed to it was that one needs an advanced knowledge of vocabulary and grammar before this approach can be truly meaningful. For some the task was at first a little overwhelming. One student felt it was possible to get an inferiority complex from it. Another student noted in response to the fact that she repeated material in her essay, "It is more important for me to be understood than to be native-like." Yet despite these reservations, the response was positive, based largely on the very nature of the feedback that the learners received in the reformulation as opposed to that of the reconstruction.

The students found the feedback in the reformulation to be deeper than that in the reconstruction -- actually illustrating to the student an appropriate way to write what the students wanted to express. A student made the point that often from the limited teacher's corrections, learners would get the false impression that most of what they wrote was fine when it

was not. Students pointed out that whereas the teacher's reconstruction may help with the technical problems in the language that the student already knows and uses, it may not really improve the student's style — for example, new idioms and more varied ways of expressing oneself. In other words, it was felt that when the teacher corrects essays, the student's own limited expressions remain, whereas the reformulation is written on a different level altogether, with the richness, variety and subtleties of the language. One student even suggested that at the advanced levels of writing, it is difficult for corrections to be valuable unless they constitute a virtual rewriting of the essay.

It was stated that this kind of individual attention not only helped heighten the students' consciousness about the lexical, grammatical, and stylistic choices that they were making while they wrote, but also gave them a means for adjusting their writing. For example, not only would they learn a new vocabulary word or idiom, or a new grammatical structure, but also get to see it used in an appropriate context.

For the reformulation to be of maximum value, students suggested that the reformulator be sure to preserve all the ideas contained in the reconstruction. Otherwise, it was sometimes difficult to make the comparison between the two versions. It was also felt that the reformulators needed to write reasonably well. Furthermore, several students expressed the need for the procedure to be carried out several times, and one said that it was important for him to do exercises incorporating the new insights in order for him to produce them when necessary. Otherwise he would not remember them. He said that it was not enough for him to be aware of correct forms because as a rule he would not pay attention to corrections.

Discussion

It is not so surprising that the reformulations had an extensive number of changes, even after a reconstruction by a teacher correcting for style as well as other things. A large number of changes is to be expected in a rewrite by a native, even when asked to stick to the author's ideas. As noted, some of the changes were a matter of personal choice -- where the original was also acceptable. It is also not surprising that the Hebrew teachers just corrected a few conspicuous items. As pointed out earlier in this paper, there are numerous reasons for this -- a heavy work load, a desire not to overwhelm the students with corrections, and a willingness to let a certain amount of interlanguage behavior persevere as long as there is communication. Likewise, it would be expected that the English teacher who was specializing in style would make a fair number of corrections regarding rhetorical functions, as she did.

The fact that the reformulations contained more changes for purposes of cohesion than the reconstructions is also expected. The reformulator who is requested not to change ideas but only how they are expressed, would certainly pay attention then to how to link these ideas together most effectively -- something a closer-order correction (as in a reconstruction) seems to do less of.

With respect to the student interviews, it may well be better to have students compare a reformulated with a reconstructed version several times, not just once. But this research seems to have indicated that students can learn a lot just from doing this procedure with one two-page essay. They have an immediate opportunity to observe that which is systematic in their interlanguage patterns. Teacher corrections over time may well cover many of these points; but the question is whether the impact is as

great -- even overwhelming. However, as pointed out by the students, consciousness raising has not only its good side -- that students may get real support as to how to adjust their writing -- but its potentially detrimental side as well -- that the students may get discouraged, particularly those who are monitor underusers. These issues need to be further investigated.

Summary and Conclusions

This paper provided a rationale for seeking feedback on compositions that would go beyond even the best teacher edit of a student essay. The paper then reported on a case study in reformulating a Hebrew essay that the author wrote, and a small-scale study of university-level EFL and HSL reformulations. The results seemed to warrant the continued use of such a procedure. The case study of my essay demonstrated how a reformulation provides information that a reconstruction does not, and how this information can be used to provide valuable insights to the writer. It was also found that several reformulators of the same reconstructed essay generally changed the same material in the essay, while the actual changes were a matter of personal style.

The small-scale study demonstrated how the reformulation usually provides more changes than the reconstruction. Both the EFL and HSL reformulations had more changes for purposes of improving cohesion than did the reconstructions. The extent of changes in rhetorical functions at the level of reconstruction depended upon the course -- with the EFL teacher paying special attention to this area, whereas the HSL teachers did not.

Students indicated areas in which their comparison of the reconstructed and reformulated versions provided them with important insights about their writing. When asked to evaluate the procedure, the students' reactions were

generally favorable. They felt that the key benefit of such a procedure was that it actually provided one complete example of a more native-like way to express the writer's same ideas, rather than simply fixing up the language that the students already knew how to use -- however inappropriately.

A problem with the design of these two studies was that there were no follow ups to investigate the effects of the procedure on actual performance. This will be a prime focus for further research in this area. Furthermore, the assistants were not always clear as to the meaning of the categories being used to identify changes made in the reconstruction and in the reformulation. More attention needs to be given to this issue. Possibly the categories could be improved and the assistants could be trained more thoroughly in how to use them.

The classroom teacher who wishes to utilize this procedure may be advised to have the students keep their essays short -- say, 200 to 300 words. This will increase the likelihood of finding a willing reformulator. If teachers want to check the quality of the reformulations, it may be possible to select at random one paragraph from the reconstruction and reformulation for comparison. The teacher may wish to start the students off on their own comparison of the two versions in class, and then assign the remainder of the comparison as homework. Perhaps the teacher would collect the two versions and the students' list of differences, and do an analysis of one paragraph at random to see how well the student is assessing the differences. The teacher could meet in individual sessions with those students in need of extra individual guidance. Students could be asked to incorporate the insights gained from this comparison of the reconstruction and reformulation into their next essay.

Clearly, there is more work to be done in refining this reformulation

procedure. There remain a number of research questions. For example:

(1) How good does the reformulation have to be? Can this procedure be productively built around the output of an average native-language writer?

(2) Does it detract from the quality of the reformulation to have it supplied by the same person who did the reconstruction?

(3) Is reformulation generally more practical a procedure in second-language as opposed to foreign-language contexts because of difficulties in obtaining competent reformulators in the FL contexts?

(4) What percent of students are capable of comparing the reconstructed and reformulated versions on their own, after having the categories of analysis thoroughly explained?

(5) Is the reformulation technique feasible with beginning or intermediate students?

Whatever the limitations of the reformulation procedure, there seems to be room for more and better feedback to students about their writing. This particular procedure utilizes community resources through enlisting the skills of native writers at large. These writers, then, are assisting the teachers in their job of refining the writing skills of advanced learners, much as native speakers in the community are contributing to refining advanced learners' speaking skills by virtue of providing native models for speaking. Just as native speakers often reformulate orally what the learner has just said, through the reformulation procedure native writers do it in writing. In both cases, the learner is given access to comprehensible input, an essential ingredient in language learning and acquisition.

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